



from the editor

E. Garry Hill

IN THIS SPACE LAST MONTH I said, “I’m sure that—even though I can’t name you a mortal-lock option on who that might be at this point—we’ll find someone else to take Usain Bolt’s place.” There is good reason to fret about his imminent departure at season’s end.

But from where I sit, the good news is that even if we don’t come up with another Bolt to sail track’s ship, we have no shortage of burgeoning superstars who even if they can’t do it singularly, can do it as a group.

There was a time when post-Games years suffered from a bit of an Olympic Hangover. They started slowly as both athletes and fans worked themselves back into the mix.

2017 is most definitely *not* one of those years. Both athletes and fans have jumped

back into the fray in a big-time way. Here’s my half-dozen leading candidates to keep the sport very much in the headlines. It’s no coincidence that the first 4 of them were on the front pages of the last 4 editions of the magazine. Starting with The Fab Four:

•**Wayde van Niekerk, February.** As the ’16 Athlete of The Year, the South African 400 star had to be on the February cover. I’d be excited about him even if he were restricted to just his signature event, but in a sagacious move the IAAF has changed the World Champs schedule so he can better attempt a Johnson-esque 200/400 double (see p. 46). With a new half-lap PR of 19.90 (albeit altitude-aided) he has confirmed that he has the raw speed to do well at the shorter sprints. South Africa also has enough backup sprint talent that he may well end up with a 4x1 medal too.

•**Usain Bolt, March.** Even if he’s only a shadow of his former self—and I don’t believe for a minute that will be the case—and even though he’s unlikely to go head-to-head with van Niekerk, the sport’s golden boy will disturb the time/space continuum wherever he goes, just because he’s Usain Bolt. It’ll be a grand farewell tour.

•**Mondo Duplantis, April.** How can you not love this mere wisp of a lad? A 145-pound 17-year-old who is putting up some world-class heights in the vault. He’s one of the most exciting young talents to come down the pike in a long time and would be generating headlines even if he were vaulting almost a foot lower than he has.

•**Sydney McLaughlin, May.** Our latest front-pager became a monster buzz-generator last year when she made Team USA at age 16. Refusing to be blinded by the lights of big-time celebrity, she passed on marching in the Opening Ceremony in Rio so she could stay home and celebrate her birthday. It might be more of the take-it-slow approach again this summer as she has suggested she may skip going to London this summer even if she makes the WC team. “That’s under my radar,” she told us last month. “I think I’m going to just get ready for college. After last summer, I think I want to be able to enjoy myself.”

No. 5 is **Vashti Cunningham**. The young high jump star has been relatively quiet since she soared during the ’16 indoor campaign, but when you become a world champion and turn pro at 18, the learning curve can be a steep one. Nonetheless, her combination of amazing physical skills and youthful exuberance is a rare combination and I predict it will come into full bloom in this not-deadly-at-all year.

And the final reason it’ll be a truly vintage year? The WC host, the city of **London**. For the first time ever the meet will stretch over 10 days, and based on what the Britons did to fill the stadium back in ’12, it’ll be the overall largest—and arguably loudest—crowd ever to watch the meet.

All-in-all, I’m seeing this as a campaign they’ll talk about for years to come.

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